

“We Felt a Personal Responsibility”

Interviewee: Frances Fragos Townsend

Interview Date: August 26–27, 2010

Project: George W. Bush Oral History

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, White House officials felt a responsibility that shifted decision-making attitudes. Frances Fragos Townsend was the U.S. Coast Guard’s assistant commandant for intelligence, for President George W. Bush. She describes the obligation many officials felt to prevent future attacks.

Frances Fragos Townsend: For those who were part of the [George W.] Bush White House, every day that they were there post-9/11 was September 12th, and every decision, every crisis, all went through that filter. I couldn't have agreed with her [Condoleezza Rice] more. It was even more poignant for those who had been in the White House on September 11th, like Condi and Steve [Hadley], but it was true for all of us. Everything had this incredible sense of urgency and we all bore the weight of responsibility for the lives lost on 9/11. From the President on down, we felt a personal responsibility to make sure that never happened again.

End of excerpt.

Interview with Frances Fragos Townsend, August 26–27, 2010, George W. Bush Oral History Project, Presidential Oral History Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/frances-fragos-townsend-oral-history>